

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:**

*Please amend the abstract submitted with the Amendment and Rely  
submitted on March 24, 2008 as follows:*

A process for the preparation of beads having a crosslinked inorganic matrix with a size controlled in the millimeter range, which comprises pouring a suspension comprising a precursor of the inorganic matrix and an alginate drop wise into a solution of a polyvalent cation salt~~[[,]]~~ ~~to obtain a reaction medium, wherein the reaction medium has~~ with a pH of less than 3, to obtain a reaction medium, in which the alginate gels, and crosslinking the precursor of the inorganic matrix by a sol-gel process.